



## News Release

# Fosston, Minn., to Launch Natural Play Spaces Project along the Fosston Inspiration Trail

*By Itollefts on Wednesday, February 20, 2013*The University of Minnesota, Crookston is launching a project in Fosston, Minn., to design a natural play space somewhere along the Fosston Inspiration Trail (FIT). Eric Castle, assistant professor in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, teaches landscape design and construction courses on the Crookston campus. Castle and Mitch Sledge, a junior majoring in horticulture from St. Louis Park, Minn., will be assisting Fosston in this project. A design workshop to engage the community is scheduled for March 5 in Fosston starting with supper at 6 pm. All are welcome. Contact Chuck Lucken at City Hall for details at 218-435-1959.

Funding for the design project comes from the U of M's Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP) and Polk County Public Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

Polk County Public Health is focusing on active living through its Statewide Health Improvement Plan work, and natural play spaces are an excellent way for families to be active together.

A natural play space is a playground that uses things found in nature - the kind of things that children used to find on their own. Getting help with the design of the space will ensure that it is not only fun, but also safe, and aesthetically pleasing. The design portion of the project will be completed by May 1 in time for the community to move from design to action during the summer of 2013. This coincides with progress on the FIT trail.

"Fosston aspires to be one of the best communities in the state of Minnesota to live and do business. That's why the Fosston Economic Development Authority (FEDA) went after the natural play space grants," said Mark Finstad, FEDA board chair. Fosston City Administrator Chuck Lucken agrees, saying "Fosston has a long tradition of finding ways to improve the community. This project will provide a safe natural play space for children and their families and friends of all ages."

The Fosston Athenian Club, a member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, voted at their December meeting to take the lead for engaging the community in the process of designing the natural play space. Club president Sue Balstad said, "This project is a perfect match with our Club Collect to be large in thought, word, and deed. We look forward to convening a meeting to engage the Fosston community in this important project."

The Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (NWRSDP) serves the people in northwestern Minnesota as they experiment with innovative ideas, build and strengthen relationships and take practical steps into a hopeful future. For more details see <http://rsdp.umn.edu/northwest>.

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